

## 2 Samuel 18:1-18 - Thursday, June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015

- Chapter 17 ended with Ahithophel taking his own life after Absalom had taken Hushai's advice, knowing Absalom was doomed.
- Actually, this is exactly what happens as we pick it up here in chapter 18, such that, Absalom ends up being killed in the battle.
- Sadly he's killed against David's direct orders to deal gently with Absalom, which again is exactly what God said would happen.

1 And David numbered the people who were with him, and set captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them. 2 Then David sent out one third of the people under the hand of Joab, one third under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and one third under the hand of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said to the people, "I also will surely go out with you myself." 3 But the people answered, "You shall not go out! For if we flee away, they will not care about us; nor if half of us die, will they care about us. But you are worth ten thousand of us now. For you are now more help to us in the city." 4 Then the king said to them, "Whatever seems best to you I will do." So the king stood beside the gate, and all the people went out by hundreds and by thousands.

- Couple of thoughts here right at the start, the first of which has to do with David's willingness to go with them into the battlefield.
- It's been suggested the reason he wants to do this is because he doesn't want to repeat his folly of not going as he did prior.
- The point being is that David had learned his lesson, which to his credit, isn't always the case especially after just one time.

- A second thought has to do with the refusal on the part of David's men, in allowing him to go out with them into the battlefield.
- Notice the reasons they give for doing this; David is worth ten thousand of them, and he could send reserves if he remained.
- Also, while they don't say this, they are probably sensitive to the fact that David would not fight against his own son Absalom.

- Another thought has to do with David's response to his men refusing that he go, in that, David instead of arguing he listens.
- The lesson here becomes rather clear, especially for leaders. Namely, listening to, instead of arguing with, those loyal to us.
- Their loyalty and devotion to their king speaks to our loyalty and devotion to our king, our greater than David, Jesus as our king.

5 Now the king had commanded Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, saying, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom." And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains orders concerning Absalom.

- I can't even imagine how difficult this must have been for David. After all, this is still his son even though he wanted to kill him.
- It's interesting to note the detail we're given about David commanding this in such a way that all the people heard his orders.
- David does this to insure everyone knows he wants Absalom forgiven and spared, which pictures Jesus Christ on the cross.

Charles Spurgeon of this says, "This tender charge showed that David expected to gain the victory, but hoped that it would not prove fatal to his son. We have here a type of that gracious King, Who, even while His persecutors were scorning and killing Him, yet prayed, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.'"

6 So the people went out into the field of battle against Israel. And the battle was in the woods of Ephraim. 7 The people of Israel were overthrown there before the servants of David, and a great slaughter of twenty thousand took place there that day. 8 For the battle there was scattered over the face of the whole countryside, and the woods devoured more people that day than the sword devoured.

- This is where we see David's military brilliance and experience come into play by directing the battle into the woods of Ephraim.
- The significance of this is that David would have had a decisive advantage by virtue of the woods sort of leveling the battlefield.
- By that I mean, a larger army, which Absalom had, would be rendered ineffective because of the rugged terrain they were in.

One commentator said it this way; "David had arranged that the battle should take place in this terrain, where the experience and courage of each individual soldier counted more than sheer numbers."

- There's something else here that I would like to point out, and it's not so easily seen at first read, and it's mentioned in verse 6.
- Notice we're told, "the people of Israel were overthrown there before the servants of David, and 20,000 men were slaughtered.
- Notice we're not told that the servants of David slaughtered them rather; they were slaughtered before the servants of David.

- It's believed that God intervened on their behalf and possibly used the rugged wooded terrain to bring about David's victory.
- The reason I point this out is because often times God will choose to use ordinary means to bring about extraordinary victories.
- This was an extraordinary victory that God brought about for David using ordinary means such as big trees and steep cliffs.

Charles Spurgeon writes, "Perishing not only by the sword, but among the thick oaks and tangled briers of the wood, which concealed fearful precipices and great caverns, into which the rebels plunged in their wild fright when the rout set in."

Adam Clarke offers this insight, "It is generally supposed that, when the army was broken, they betook themselves to the wood, fell into pits, swamps, and so forth, and being entangled, were hewn down by David's men; but the Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic, state that they were devoured by wild beasts in the wood."

9 Then Absalom met the servants of David. Absalom rode on a mule. The mule went under the thick boughs of a great terebinth tree, and his head caught in the terebinth; so he was left hanging between heaven and earth. And the mule which was under him went on.

- You'll forgive me for noticing this, but I find it rather peculiar that Absalom would be riding a mule of all things into the battlefield.
- I also find it rather interesting that his hair gets caught in a great terebinth tree leaving him hanging between heaven and earth.
- What an apt description of Absalom's fate, hanging between heaven and earth, and all because of his most proud possession.

Charles Spurgeon had this to say, "The very trees of the wood are in arms against the ungodly. Absalom had made his hair his pride, and it became his ruin; men often perish through that which they idolize. What must have been the thoughts of this unnatural young prince when he found himself caught in the forked branch of the oak, and suspended between heaven and earth to die the death of the accursed! Let children beware of ingratitude to parents, for it is a sin which peculiarly provokes the wrath of the Most High."

10 Now a certain man saw it and told Joab, and said, "I just saw Absalom hanging in a terebinth tree!" 11 So Joab said to the man who told him, "You just saw him! And why did you not strike him there to the ground? I would have given you ten shekels of silver and a belt." 12 But the man said to Joab, "Though I were to receive a thousand shekels of silver in my hand, I would not raise my hand against the king's son. For in our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, saying, 'Beware lest anyone touch the young man Absalom!' 13 Otherwise I would have dealt falsely against my own life. For there is nothing hidden from the king, and you yourself would have set yourself against me."

- I find it most interesting that we're not given the name of this man who demonstrates such loyalty and commitment to David.
- It's remarkable considering that he still wouldn't have done it if Joab would've given him a thousand shekels of silver to do it.
- I would submit this man was not only loyal and faithful, he was also wise, such that, he knew doing it would cost him his life.

14 Then Joab said, "I cannot linger with you." And he took three spears in his hand and thrust them through Absalom's heart, while he was still alive in the midst of the terebinth tree. 15 And ten young men who bore Joab's armor surrounded Absalom, and struck and killed him.

- While I realize Joab killing Absalom in this way may seem cold and cruel, I would suggest that he's actually being very merciful.
- The reason I suggest that is because Joab could have thrust those three spears into his stomach instead of killing him instantly.
- This brings up the question of why kill him at all, especially in light of the fact that doing so was in direct disobedience to David.

G. Campbell Morgan wrote, "He had seen David's action toward his sons characterized by lack of discipline. In the highest interests of the kingdom his hand was raised to slay Absalom."

Adam Clarke, "Long ago he should have died by the hand of justice; and now all his crimes are visited on him in his last act of rebellion. Yet, in the present circumstances, Joab's act was base and disloyal, and a cowardly murder."

- There's an interesting irony in verse 15 where we're told it was ten young men who struck and ended up finally killing Absalom.
- The reason I mention this irony is because the number of David's concubines that Absalom defiled was also a total of ten.
- At the risk of reading too much into this, I am of the belief that this was in effect by God's design connecting his death to them.

One commentator said it this way, "As he had defiled his father's ten concubines, so by these ten youngsters he hath that little breath that was left in him beaten out of his body."

16 So Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing Israel. For Joab held back the people. 17 And they took Absalom and cast him into a large pit in the woods, and laid a very large heap of stones over him. Then all Israel fled, everyone to his tent. 18 Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up a pillar for himself, which is in the King's Valley. For he said, "I have no son to keep my name in remembrance." He called the pillar after his own name. And to this day it is called Absalom's Monument.

- Here, Joab knows that the battle has ended, and as such, he does not want any more people killed now that Absalom is dead.
- It's interesting to note Absalom had built a monument for himself because he had no son to keep his name in remembrance.
- The reason this is interesting is that we know from 2 Samuel 14:27 that Absalom actually had three sons who must have died.

- Once again, there's another irony here in the sense that Joab has him cast into a large pit and heaps very large stones on him.
- The reason this is ironic is because doubtless, Absalom's monument was made of stone, only to have him buried under stones.
- The significance of this is quite demeaning when you realize that they would put their rubbish in a pit and heap stones over it.

- According to Deuteronomy 21:18-21 rebellious sons were to be stoned to death, which may another reason why Joab did this.
- Herein lies a takeaway from tonight's study; bitterness often times leads to rebelliousness, which will always lead to one's death.
- Would to God that bitterness and rebellion will never characterize our lives as Christians, lest we also meet with a similar end.